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REVIEWS AND NOTES

THE LIFE OF KARL FOLLEN. A Study in German-American Cultural Relations. By Spindler, George W., Ph.D. The University of Chicago Press. Chicago, Illinois, 1917.

The work in question is the first of a series of historical monographs published under the auspices of the German-American Historical Society of Illinois, edited by Professor Julius Goebel. It is certainly a good beginning. In the first place, Dr. Spindler has rendered a really scientific account of the life of Karl Follen. All previous attempts in this direction contained too much of the personal element, and for the most part they were very fragmentary. Dr. Spindler has made careful use of all the widely scattered material, has conscientiously weighed conflicting evidence and striven for no other goal than for the attainment of the truth. In the light of his findings, Karl Follen appears as a man of wide learning, keen insight, a fearless thinker, who pursued every thought to whatever conclusion it led him, and who had the courage to apply these conclusions to his own conduct, regardless of the possible consequences to himself. But we should be wrong if we were to assume that Follen's superior intellectual power was the most important trait in his make-up; he was above all a man of the heart, his heart, and not his reasoning was the main spring of action with him.

The social and official position of his father and Follen's own ability would have made a splendid career possible, nay easy for him, if he had only known, or been willing to compromise. At the outset, his youthful enthusiasm led him to radical demands for political reform; he desired the unification of his fatherland, or rather of all the people of German blood, under a republican form of government, embodying the principles of liberty, equality, and human brotherhood on a far loftier plane than has ever been attained. His aspirations were born of a religious fervor that knew no impossibilities. In the poetic production of his youth, he advocated indeed violence, it would seem, but one must agree with Dr. Spindler that it is incompatible with Follen's character and his actual, practical conduct, to see in those verbose utterances anything but poetical exaggerations. It appears likewise unfair to accuse Follen of complicity in the murder of Kotzebue, or charge him with the moral responsibility for it. The evidence is conflicting on that point, but the adverse part of it is by no means clear; it operates far more with possibilities and suggestions than with plain statement of facts. Since according to Follen's views, the state has no existence apart from the individuals that compose it, and the aggregate is amenable to the same ethical laws as

the individual, it seems unlikely that he instigated a deed of aggression for the welfare of the whole which he never could have committed in his own interests. Investigations and trials instituted at the time produced no evidence of Follen's complicity in the deed; but he remained an object of suspicion and when in January 1820 his elder brother and a friend were arrested as political suspects, he feared for his own safety and fled the country, never to return. Not until nearly five years later, did Follen emigrate to America. At first it seemed that his troubles were ended when he reached these shores. Follen, some time after his arrival, wrote home glowing accounts about American freedom, institutions and conditions, but he soon discovered that perfect liberty had not yet been achieved here, and true to his principles, he made himself again the champion of the oppressed by joining the abolition movement, with the result that he again had to sacrifice his material welfare to his devotion to an ideal. Even if his life had not been cut short by an untimely death, he probably would have never attained worldly success, but in the realm of the spiritual his achievements were of the highest order.

The most important part of Follen's life were, of course, the fifteen years he spent in the United States, and Dr. Spindler properly puts the emphasis upon that part. But he has given us here far more than a mere account of Follen; he has rendered a clear, concise, and yet complete presentation of the religious, philosophical and political tendencies of New England life at that period. In doing so, he has not digressed, for Follen's life was so intimately associated with all this that its significance cannot be made comprehensible apart from its setting.

In December 1825, after a year's residence in this country, Follen came to Cambridge and entered at once upon his duties as instructor in German at Harvard College. Inasmuch as German never had been taught before at any American college, Follen had to perform the difficult task of the pioneer. What this meant, one can scarcely imagine at the present day. Follen not only had to create an interest in the subject taught by him for the first time, but he also had to create simultaneously the instruments indispensable for carrying on his work. There was no grammar or reader in existence, suitable for use with American students. But by indefatigable labor, Follen quickly supplied the want, and, especially as regards the reader compiled by him, with great skill and success. The fact that this reader was still used at Harvard in the sixties of last century speaks well for its merits. His summary of German literature as given in general lectures, particularly his analysis of some of Schiller's works, show not only a thorough grasp of his subject, but also great originality and independence of thought. In spite of the fact that, at first, library facilities for his work were almost entirely lacking, he accomplished enviable results.

Soon his influence broadened with a corresponding increase in labor; for since 1828 he taught ethics and history in the Harvard divinity school for a time. Just as important as his influence as a teacher of German language and literature were his efforts to disseminate some knowledge and create a correct appreciation of German philosophical thought among an ever growing number of New England scholars and divines. The paramount difficulty which he had to overcome in this field was of a somewhat different nature, but hardly less formidable. Above all he had to combat a widespread prejudice against German philosophy. Dr. Spindler is here as elsewhere very careful not to attribute all progress made in this direction by the intellectual men of New England in those days to Follen, but one must agree with the author that Follen's influence was no small factor

His efforts did not cease here. Being thoroughly convinced that a sound mind presupposes a sound body, he established gymnastics at Harvard, like instruction in German an entire innovation, at least as a systematic course. Follen even found the necessary time and energy to devote considerable attention to the work at the public gymnasium established in Boston. If we look into the system of gymnastics taught by him, we find all the essentials of our present day physical training, to be sure: without any elaborate physiological theory for its foundation. Here Follen was not absolutely the first in this country. Gymnastics had been introduced as a part of the regular instruction at another school two years before the course at Harvard was established, as Dr. Spindler was well aware. The institution in question, the Round Hill School of Northampton, Mass. was opened in the fall of 1823 by George Bancroft and Joseph Green Cogswell. The two men sought to realize educational ideals which they had formed abroad, especially by contact with the educational life of Germany, and they strongly believed in the truth of the saying, *mens sana in corpore sano*. In "Some Account of the School, etc." of the year 1826 the statement is found: "We are deeply impressed with the necessity of uniting physical with moral education; and are particularly favored in executing our plans of connecting them by the assistance of a pupil and friend of Jahn, the greatest modern advocate of gymnastics. We have proceeded slowly in our attempts, for the undertaking was a new one; but now we see ourselves near the accomplishment of our views. The whole subject of the union of moral and physical education is a great deal simpler, than it may at first appear. And here, too, we may say that we were the first in the new continent to connect gymnastics with a purely literary establishment."¹ In a circular of later date we read: "The rest of the intervals is appropriated to exercise. Riding on

¹ Bassett, John Spencer, *The Round Hill School*, p. 41. Reprinted from the proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society for April, 1917. Worcester, Mass., 1917.

horseback, gymnastics, bathing, and dancing are prescribed recreations, under the same regulations as the literary exercises."²

Follen's views on educational matters in general were in advance of his times. He at one time contemplated establishing a school at which the study of the classics was to yield first place to the pursuit of the natural sciences and modern languages. In the education of children, he insisted that their play instinct be made the basis of all work, anticipating the Montessori method, though only in theory, and that instruction must be solely governed, not by the future requirements of the man, but by the present needs of the child. Then the child would grow up into a far better citizen, than by any endeavor to instil into the child directly views and principles supposedly conducive to good citizenship.

The last years of his life, Follen spent in the ministry of the Unitarian church, and in this field, too, he achieved great success, but also met, as was natural, with a good deal of opposition. Religion was for him conviction with love for its vital force; creed and dogma were negligible externalities. Follen hoped to realize in his own day what has not yet been accomplished, namely the unification of all Christian people in one great religious body, without, however, disturbing the different confessions of faith. Material success was impaired, in this field, too, by the antagonism aroused by Follen's attitude towards slavery. It is a highly significant fact that the Church in those days was arrayed almost solidly on the side of slavery. The United States were then as now, the land of religious freedom; the right of worship was granted to the adherents of any creed whatsoever. But the separation of church and state had not brought about the spiritual liberation of the former, its separation from the material interests of the day, and so it only followed where it should have led.

Follen took a conspicuous part in the propaganda for the abolition of slavery, a movement which was frowned upon by legislatures and courts alike, and, of course, attempts were made to prohibit all utterances directed against this institution. In this connection, Follen rose to a most bold, lucid, and glorious defense of free speech. The privilege of free speech, he declared, was the unalienable right of every citizen, at times of stress and great differences of opinion only more so than ever. He considered it the right, nay the duty, of any minority to strive to constitute itself a majority by exercising the right of free speech, and he justly regarded interference on the part of a democratic government as a far more serious menace to liberty than suppression of free utterance on the part of an absolute monarch. If we take into account the general sentiment of the time, we are not surprised that all the churches of Boston and some others, besides, were

² Outline of the system of education at the Round Hill School. June 1831, p. 13. Boston, 1831, from N. Hales Steam Power Press.

refused for the purpose of holding a memorial service in honor of Karl Follen, when he had lost his life at sea in January, 1840. His unconditional, fearless attitude in all questions of liberty and justice made his life a failure according to worldly standards, but "in all that is best worth living for,—growth, peace, love, usefulness, honor, and abiding presence in greatful memories, Karl Follen was crowned with a perfect success."

Dr. Spindler's presentation leaves the reader with the satisfaction derived from the perusal of work well done. Some casual users will probably feel the lack of an index, especially because of the great abundance of material.—But few typographical errors have come to my notice. Page 14, note 1: *acheologist* instead of *archeologist*; page 52, line 10: *aufgegagngen* instead of *aufgegangen*; page 188: no indication in the text to what note 1 refers. The bibliography appended contains valuable data for any one interested in that period of New England intellectual life coinciding with Karl Follen's sojourn in the United States.

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DIE ZECHER- UND SCHLEMMERLIEDER IM DEUTSCHEN VOLKSLIEDE BIS ZUM DREISSIGJÄHRIGEN KRIEGE von Max Steidel. Karlsruhe, J. Liepmannssohn.

1914. 107 pp.

During the last score of years the greater part of the important publications on the early German folksong have been reprints or studies of source material. The title of the above Heidelberg dissertation gave one the hope of finding the work an adequate comprehensive treatment of one of the most important groups of songs. But an examination of the essay brings a considerable degree of disappointment. The author was not equal to his task.

An introduction of twelve pages does not pretend to do much more than to give a sketch of the part played by drinking and drinking customs in Germany of the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries. The main part of the study begins with a discussion of miscellaneous stereotype expressions of the drinking songs, and proceeds in a second division to those that are found in wine songs in particular. Then follows a consideration of the relatively few beer songs; the kinds of glasses and drinking vessels mentioned in the songs; the almost universal custom of *Zutrinken* (fairly well worked out); gambling, music, and the serving of food at drinking bouts; the behavior of the intoxicated; and, finally, woman as she appears in convivial songs. A third brief section is devoted to quotations from some of the temperance literature of that day in prose and verse, particularly the contrafacts.